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Shifting the Paradigm – Colin Jerwood's "There is No Power Without Control".

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Shifting the Paradigm – Colin Jerwood's "There is No Power Without Control".

Gita Marta Yegane Arani, Gruppe Messel

This is difficult for me to write. The anarchist punk musician activist who stood at the center of my own activism since I was a teenager, has made his step into 'the worlds that we cannot describe'. So this is about Colin Jerwood – May 6, 1962 – June 2, 2025 -, the founder of Mortarhate Records and singer of Conflict.

As relevant for the sake of activism, I don't want to segregate within the work of Mortarhate as a label and Conflict's work as a band, since the releases all encompass a politicalness, that does not put Animal Rights into a disconnected niche, but contextualize all fields of societal problematics, as they all stem from similar sources and dynamics.

Up until today, no bands – after this part of the anarcho punk [*just anarcho; call it what you will, since we may be moving beyond sometimes misleading 'category'*] movement had initiated itself – programmatically had the strong impetus and enough luck to be embraced by their peers and movements surrounding them, to create and stand for Animal Rights 'in tonality', in punk and related genres, as did the bands whom we know these days who have been standing at the core of expressing *what seemed to be a somewhat appropriate sentiment towards the ongoing faunacides*, exerted by societies globally.

And of course societies that are speciesist (that is to say: the normal majorities within them) will not generate a critique of themselves in an appropriate form. What they might do is create cover ups and downplay the realities of their motives for injustice.

Animal Rights Punk in the 1980ies opens the chapter of finally expressing what society is doing to animality, to nonhuman groups and individuals – not, as society claims, out of some kind of normality, cultural habits and traditions, but what they do out of "normalities" of speciesist evilness from the onset on in the sense of utter injustice.

Had it not been for this kind of activism in punk, up until now likely nobody would have voiced a critique based on > the societal critique overall, with this kind of quality of calling people to action. Most people who are creative in music, like in other arts, want to appeal to audiences and don't seek to seriously mobilize against society and mainstream values.

The types of rebellion that are typically sold 'as such' in pop culture so far mostly have represented generational shifts and breaks, but as we see in the case of Animal Rights and the thread that has taken its initials mainly with a few punk bands in the early 1980es, here we have the rare incidence where music expresses political message and stands for a basic form of taking responsibilities for damages that our societies don't even acknowledge beyond any superficial level – and yes society puts their irresponsibilities into forms of entertainment. And albeit the independent sector too did of course not fall out of nowhere, we here clearly have a tangible turning point.

This is a huge and unique legacy that Colin held together by standing for commitments and goals, and it's this continuity in Animal Rights activism, as part of an overall effort for paradigm changes, that may reasonably entail – as if it is a task passed on to each of us – what each of us, what we all make of our spans of living and dying.

A lot of people will not be ignorant enough to buy into that idea of putting a fellow activist and spearhead simply into a form of how-a-past-history-will-then-be-told, since as we know: histories are always or mostly to be taken with a degree of caution; relevant parts of history (in terms of "who is causing or has been causing change … ") don't fit into the filters of society, and fitting things into certain narratives *can* stifle a complementary sense for the role of active participation. Own ways and methods of telling histories are important, since at the end of the day told fiction and untold realities can't be untangled in a process of sifting out what matters and what does not.

The reason why Colin's efforts have such a huge effect personally on his recipients is, I believe, not because friends and admirers declared him to be a "leader" type of person or anything like that, neither did he publicly aim to be representing an image. The very idea of seeking to be someone that is put on a

pedestal was not only something his recipients had no need for, when they appreciated his work; the need to sort individuals into “followers” and “leaders” was virtually proven to be unnecessary here and from the participatory standpoint illogical and not compatible with the messages that Colin expressed in his lyrics and ideas.

A clear cut, serious and politically differing way is possible to live, and it’s possible in creativity, as an expression of taking responsibilities, caring, altruism, etc.

And only in such a non-hierarchical and gladly “unsaleable”, reasonable virtual practice, we get the revolutionary sense, that interestingly we lack so much in the anthropocene, in societies that claim some form of neutrality, that is nothing more but “neutrality” which excludes everything and everyone nonhuman. Majorities not only face, but equally drive ecocide, and many people see the atrocities of the human wars against animality somewhat as a matter of own survival and right, that they don’t want to be questioned.

On the creative level – in the foreground of this twist of taking passively and/or actively part in the destructive dilemmas of being human in the first place – we now know that those individuals who created/create forms of hardcore or punk (or anything) that expresses their serious opinions and feelings about the injustices against the world, that these people are *contentwise* randomized by a mainstream society, that is much “closer by” than all subcultures ever wanted to admit, and that thus these musicians are muted, not for being part of their “movements” but on the level of expressed meaning, their subjects and commitment *is hardly pro-actively supported in social contexts* which don’t really want to overcome stubborn consumerism, but rather clog up movements by pretending to be all about change where it matters, where in reality a status quo is simply prolonged.

Societies sort themselves out, by pushing messages, under the name of “we are all one”, into hierarchical orders, putting a lot of redundance at the top of how they communicate and exchange ideas and content, while serious statements and sentiments are typically to be found at the margins – so that everyone will know that it’s always gonna be these digestive processes of selecting (knee-jerk and almost ‘automatized’) that will condemn *change towards all what stands outside*

of its processes (the world itself), to paradoxically turn into the tools of oppressing change itself – simply by projecting what is going happen (repetition) and what is "not viable" (ill logic) in the counterfeit world for which standards are set, by what is offered and what is chosen. The more you leave this process, the more invisible you will get in their perpetuum mobile like habits in communication (in the broad sense).

Colin is someone who filled a new space that he and his friends saw, with ideas, content, messages and a participatory mindset that he lived and manifested. To have "entered a new step in these galaxies" is not about someone becoming a memorial/Wikipedia page, with someone like him, I believe. The legacy we speak about here is much more about taking up the baton in a relay race, as the minimum.

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On April the 11th 2025 Colin wrote on Social Media:

"I would like to sincerely apologise to one and all, that I was, unfortunately, unable to make an appearance at the last three Conflict gigs. This was due to a health condition which has floored me since November. Since I had to pull my part of that gig. In short, I can't breathe properly. I've had my medication upgraded so hopefully I will be able return asap. In the meantime I am so so proud of the other Conflict members esp Fi for taking the baton.
Thank you so much for your support as ever and understanding." [Source: https://www.facebook.com/colin.conflict/posts/pfbid0aY5ng5cYMMWfn1HkPBWR8Ep7ih6oE47Q3GUY2M3q9VSGMvjxK5zUcReKenPEgYNpl , 16.07.2025]

I wrote to him asking him if we could interview him, and on April the 25th Colin replied giving me his yes.

After the shock of hearing about Colin's passing, we expressed our condolences to his family and some of his friends. His friend David from Knockout Booking & Records replied to us on the Jun the 3rd "as far as I know Colin was working on the replies to your questions."

We clearly hope that Colin was able to read our questions, and we hope he could see just how much we appreciate his work. We decided after the shock to put our questions on our site Tierrechtsethik.de. We wrote:

We just learned about the passing of our activist friend Conflict's singer and huge example to a generation in Animal Rights activism and punk: Colin Jerwood. We are, like everybody else, in deep shock and wish condolences to his family and friends.

Colin had agreed, just a few weeks ago, to give us a written interview for Tierautonomie. We had heard that he had problems with his lungs, with his breathing as he let people know via facebook, hence we were worried and thought that he might now nevertheless have a pause, not making concerts for a short while, so we contacted Colin.

And to our astonishment we must say, he agreed to give us a written interview. He did not have the chance to let us know the answers to these questions. But we are glad that that we could even just ask – also as a form to give him a critical feedback and an evaluation of the current situation with activism, anarcho punk and animal rights punk in particular; and with so many people out and about every inch of the mainstream, who are more about fame and money in today's punk spectrum.

About resistance …

Dear Colin, here are my (six) long questions. I hope they are okay and am very thrilled about this entire thing – to interview you after having been a huge admirer of your activism since I had my first Conflict record with 15 in 1983, having been deeply impressed at a gig in a pub in Stockwell London around that time, and with building my own activism from your example! If any question is weird or unclear, please let me know so that I can make the point of my question clearer. (It's a bit stupid when the questions are very long, since it looks weird if the answer is shorter, and maybe the questions seem unnerving to you in the way in which they are written, since they are a bit complicated. I just hope I am understandable in what I say, and if not, please let me know.)

Palang (Gita, veganswines, and other nicknames, I use palang in this interview)

The course of resistance amidst amassing causes

1. Starting the change

Palang: Learning about your work that started in 1981 (after Crass from 1977 onwards kind of initiated the outspoken political social criticalness in what we typically term Anarcho-Punk today) I should say that you, alongside Icons of Filth and other bands, whom you also later featured on your release: “this is the ALF” [1989, reissued with updated tracklist in 1998], that you initiated and stood for Animal Rights in the Anarcho Punk movement. Conflict and the Mortarhate label have been a if not the central driver. How did you get the impetus in the early years to write tracks like Meat Means Murder on It’s Time To See Who’s Who (1983) and later other anthems like Tough Shit Mikey, Berkshire Cunt and Slaughter of Innocence (for which Steve Ignorant joined up with you)?

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2. Being inclusive in Anarcho-Punk

Palang: Standing for activism, in a form which maintains spaces of tolerance while being clear cut about messages, seems to be part of the anarcho punk movement. How do you deal with the fact that clear messages unavoidably border on sides, nevertheless, where practical ignorance or carelessness about issues are something that make up societal normalcies, in general. How can we deal with the fact that people can be positive about stuff yet still hardly change anything in their practical daily lives?

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3. What about friends/fellow activists, etc. that go along theoretically but not practically

Palang: The big pillars within the Animal Rights movement: Antivivisection, Antihunt/Hunt Sabbing, Veganism with all the Farm Animal issues and just all aspects of instrumentalization of nonhuman Animals – with these issues that drive the Animal Rights movement (on the global and on the local levels), what

can we do these days – coming from an angle of being *as critical of society and system as possible*, with a strong culture of protest which questions power and hierarchies in a fundamental way – how can we prevent our messages from being watered down? Basically everybody considers themselves to be part of some resistance branch in society these days. And everyone praises anarcho punk for being so clear cut about Animal Rights and for being the only movement in terms of music and subculture that outstandingly made Animal Issues a visible issue of an encompassing progressiveness in terms of justice and ethics, yet it seems that people take this part of Animal Rights history for granted. Many people consider themselves to be "informed enough" and stop at that point. People who embrace Animal Rights as part of "the topics they should cover" oftentimes exclude Animal Rights on a personal daily "routine" of protest, like you get people who have thrived on the Anarcho Punk history and subculture but fully exclude practical ethical concern towards Animal issues while believing they also stand for *this* part of Anarcho Punk. How can we make the connection between causes clearer for people to become more decided themselves, when they basically are open to Animal Rights?

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4. Avoiding the cultural industrial complex with a self-run independent label: taking the credible path

Palang: Evading consumerism, evading the music (charts crap) market and the cultural industrial complex was a core part of the idea of resistance, to many things I suppose. People created independent labels, like you with Mortarhate (1983), and thereby showed that it was possible to communicate other messages and content and create other important spaces of communication even therewith. In a parallel contrasting manner we had bands – going along with ideas, that one would make punk accessible "to the masses" and that one would undermine the typical music industry (like mainstreaming punk) – which more or less straight forwardly produced punk content that was *integrable* with the mainstream. In Germany for instance today the mainstreamed punk is in fact the "kind of punk" that people consider to be the golden standard for being outspoken and even revolutionary in a sense. In the US, as a big "market" the map looks different again, but overall we seem to have virtually a division here: a branch of punk that contained and contains the message of anticonsumerism etc. etc. and

another branch that does not consider the critique of the markets even as a point to really discuss it seems. What shall we make of this difference, especially these days with a huge to trend towards leftist thought? I believe consistency matters, but this really seems to be an overlooked thing in Punk. What do you think about this divide in approach?

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5. The minority change question and its hardships

Palang: The crossroads of political life that we face these days, again coming from an anarchist standpoint, facing the consequences of the anthropocene and being just an individual, being just a few, being just a perhaps suppressed political and/or social minority and standing against all those factors where we are not able to activate any levers to stop the damages done, yet again everything depends on each one to act up, to boycott, to create change, etc., to not be part of the problem. How can we keep a *sensible form of resistance* feasable, without having everything swallowed up by people who create questionable levers and who therewith inadvertently disable action from "bottom up". How can we say our way to go about things makes sense, even when we look powerless in contrast to this and that?

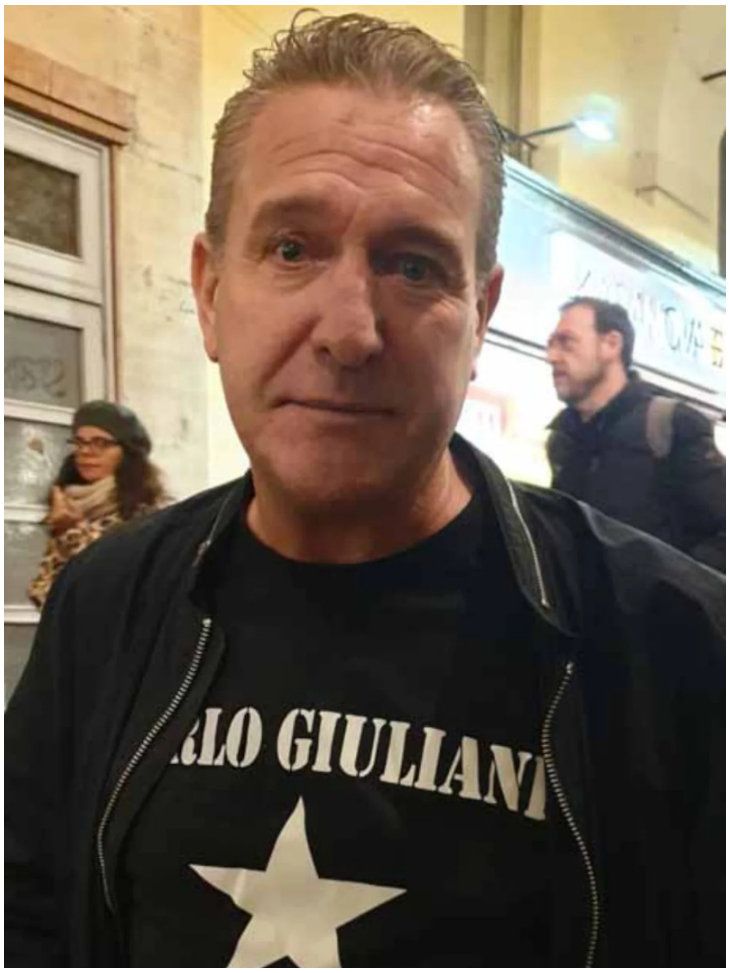
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6. The rare alarmed, upset language, that names things as how they are

Palang: Speaking small band projects internationally: Specific examples of Hardcore and Vegan Straight Edge with their relation to the outspokenness of anarcho punk as including Animal Rights – without the basis which political Musician-Activists like you created and the consistency, we wouldn't be as far as we are today. The political live of protest made up of solid pillars of content is here, but the power and support coming from this will probably be suppressed or watered down by the mainstream once they fully digest anarcho punk history. With this message in music being scattered, and Animal Rights needing to be appropriately expressed and evidently only these kinds of expression and languages are able to do it, do you think that *independent political music that conveys Animal Rights with the impetus of resistance toward society* can survive

after mainstream society finds out that this type of resistance and critique is culturally indigestible in a speciesist world?

Thank you so much for all that you do!



Colin Jerwood

We close with two German translations of two important Animal Rights anthems written by Colin / Conflict.

Vom Conflict Album: It’s Time to see Who’s Who, Mortarhate, 1983.

Conflict - Meat Means Murder, Übersetzung

Fleisch bedeutet Mord

Die Fabrik stößt alles aus, verarbeitet und feinsäuberlich verpackt,
Eine obskure, gemordete Substanz auf deren Etikett FLEISCH steht,
Hinter falschen Bezeichnungen wie Schwein, Schinken, Kalb und Rind,
Ein Auge ist ein Auge, ein Leben ein Leben, ein nun vergessenes Wissen,
Und täglich wird diese Farce weiter am Fließband generiert,

Um auf einem Tisch zu landen und dann aus einem Arsch herausgeschissen zu werden,
Und weiter stehen sie Schlange und weiterhin schauen sie,
Gliedmaßen aussortierend, die sich eignen zum Schmoren,
Kadaver zu Haufen aufgetürmt,
Sortiert man die saftigen Stücke aus dem Tiefkühler,
Doch seht ihr nicht, der Saft ist Blut?
Aus neugeborenen Kehlen fließen die roten Flüsse,
Blut aus den jungen Herzen, Blut aus ihren Adern,
Euer Blut oder ihr Blut, dient dem Gleichen.

Jetzt sitzt du hier am Tisch und grinst.
Sitzt da und isst, und denkst nie über deine Speisen nach,
Alles auf sterilen Tellern serviert, denkst du dabei nicht ans Töten,
Der weiteste Gang, den dein Gehirn gehen mag ist, ob das hier zum Braten oder zum Grillen geeignet ist
Du beklagst das Robbensterben, das Abschlachten der Wale,
Aber spielt es wirklich eine Rolle, ob ein Tier am Land oder im Wasser lebt?
Du hattest noch nie einen Pelzmantel, du denkst, das ist grausam gegenüber dem Nerz,
Aber was ist mit der Kuh, dem Schwein, dem Schaf, geben die Tiere dir nicht zu denken?
Seit dem Tag, an dem du geboren wurdest, hat man mit dir nie über den fehlenden Verbindungspunkt gesprochen,
Doch du stehst immer noch in der Schlange und schaust dir alles an,
Sortierst die Gliedmaßen, die gerade richtig sind zum Schmoren,
Kadaver gestapelt in einem Haufen,
Sortierst du die saftigen Stücke aus dem Tiefkühler,
Doch siehst du nicht, dass dieser Saft Blut ist?
Aus jungen Kehlen fließen die roten Flüsse,
DEIN BLUT, IHR BLUT, dient Demselben.

-

Conflict – Meat Means Murder

The factory is churning out all processed packed and neat,
An obscure butchered substance and the label reads MEAT,
Hidden behind false names such as Pork, Ham, Veal, and Beef,
An eyes an eye, a life's a life, the now Forgotten belief,
And everyday production lines are feeding out this farce,
To end up on a table, then shot out of an arse
Yet still they'r queuing and still they'r viewing,
Sawing out limbs just right for stewing,
Carcasses piled up in a heap,
Sort juicy chunks from freezers deep,
Well can't you see that juice is blood,
From newborn throats red rivers flood,
Blood form young hearts, blood from the veins,
Your blood their blood serves the same

Now you're at the table, sitting, grinning.
Sitting there eating you never realize the filling.
It's served upon a sterile plate you don't think of killing,
The furthest your brain takes you, is it for frying or for grilling?
You moan about the seal cull, about the whale slaughter,
But does it really matter whether it lives on land or water?
You've never had a fur coat, you think is crule to the mink,
Well How about the cow, pig or sheep don't they make you think?
Since the day that you were born you've never been told the missing link,
Yet still there queuing and still there viewing,
Sawing out limbs just right for stewing,
Carcasses piled up in a heap,
Sort juicy chunks from freezers deep,
Well can't you see the juice is blood,
From newborn throats red rivers flood,
YOUR BLOOD, THERE BLOOD, serves the same.

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Vom Conflict Album: Increase The Pressure, Mortarhate, 1984.

Conflict - Tough Shit Mickey, Übersetzung

So ein Pech, Mickey!

Mutter Natur lächelt und läutet einen neuen Tag ein
Die meisten Menschen auf der Erde schlafen noch gemütlich und warm
Draußen auf den Feldern und Weiden wird es auch ein neuer Tag
Einer ohne den Krieg und den Hass, den ich und du kennen
Ein Schrei stört die Ruhe; die Katze hat gerade eine Maus getötet
sagt die Mutter gefühlvoll, während sie aus dem Haus schaut
Es ist Frühstückszeit, die Uhr schlägt neun, Schinken, Speck, ein Ei oder zwei?
Wie schade um die Maus, was gibt's heute Abend zum Tee, Lammeintopf?

Nun, es gibt viel zu tun und die Familie teilt sich auf.
Der Vater arbeitet, um den Unterhalt zu verdienen, er ist Metzger und wird gut bezahlt.

Die Töchter gehen zur Reitschule, die Mutter wäscht den Mist ab
Ein Sohn spielt mit Soldaten, der andere ärgert die Katze
Draußen auf den Feldern spielt sich eine andere Geschichte ab
Füchse kauern mit ihren Jungen, um den Menschen zu entkommen
Kaninchen rennen um ihr Leben, Rehe gehen hinter den Bäumen in Deckung
Die Mutter seufzt ungläubig, dann bereitet sie das Fleisch zu

Denkt darüber nach, was ihr tut. Das System ist darauf ausgerichtet, alles zu zerstören
Das Leben, nicht den Profit. Wir müssen das verdammt nochmal beenden

Denn schon bald wird es kein Leben mehr geben
Nicht ein Wesen auf dem Land oder im Meer, ein Vogel im Himmel
Sie werden erschossen, harpuniert, gegessen und zur Vernichtung gejagt
Ausgelöscht von den intelligenten Menschen, die stets beweisen, dass es so etwas
wie eine gerechte Welt, mit leben und leben lassen, nicht gibt

Die königliche Familie geht auf die Jagd, wie beispielhaft für das Volk
Das Volk, das sie führen, und zu diesem gehöre ich nicht
Ich habe genug Schmerz und Folter derer gesehen, die keine Stimme haben

Also werde ich für sie im Rundumschlag sprechen
Und wenn jemand versucht mich seiner Peitsche zu treffen, dann schlage ich verdammt nochmal zurück

Denn ich habe genug von diesem Wahnsinn, in diesen Höllentheatern
Genug davon, dass sie die Füchse ihren Jagden erlegen
Von Robbenbabys, die geknüppelt werden, während man ihre Mütter zerstückelt

Sie befriedigen ihre Gier und ihr Reichtum ist auf Blut errichtet
Ihr Schlachthaus spukt in den Hinterköpfen
Es ist die Gaskammer in der Landwirtschaft, das Ende der Fahnenstange

Es ist eine Schande um diese Maus!

—

Conflict – Tough Shit Mickey!

Mother Nature smiles and cracks a new days dawn
Most people on the earth are sleeping comfortably and warm
Out in the fields and pastures, it’s another new day too
One without the war and hatred that is known by me and you
A shriek disturbs the peacefulness; the cat’s just killed a mouse
The mother says with feeling as she looks out from the house
It’s breakfast time, the clock strikes nine, ham, bacon, one egg or two?
What a shame about that mouse, what’s for tea tonight, lamb stew?

Well, there’s things to do, so the family divides in separate ways
Father works to earn the keep, he’s a butcher and well paid
The daughters go to riding school mother washes up the crap
One son plays with soldiers; the other aggravates the cat
Back out in the fields, a different story’s taking place
Foxes cower with their cubs to escape the human race

Rabbits run for life, deer take cover in the trees
The mother sighs with disbelief, then prepares the meat
Think what you're doing the systems set to ruin
The life not the profit we've got to fucking stop it

Because before too long there will nothing left alive
Not a creature on the land or sea, a bird in the sky
They'll be shot, harpooned, eaten and hunted too much
Vivisected by the clever men who prove that there's no such
Thing as a fair world with live and let live
The royal family go hunting what an example to give
To the people they lead and that don't include me
I've seen enough pain and torture of those who can't speak
So I'm gonna speak for them in an all out attack
And if someone tries to whip me, then I will fucking whip them back
Because I have had enough of this madness in those theatres of hell
Enough of them hounding the fox to the kill
Of baby seals being clubbed, their mothers cut up
They satisfy their greed, their wealth's built on blood
Of their slaughterhouse haunting the back of the mind
The gas chamber of the farm life, the end of the line

It's a shame about that mouse!

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Weitere Texte von besonderem Interesse sind:

Berkshire Cunt, This is the A.L.F, Slaughter of Innocence (mit Steve Ignorant).

Tierautonomie

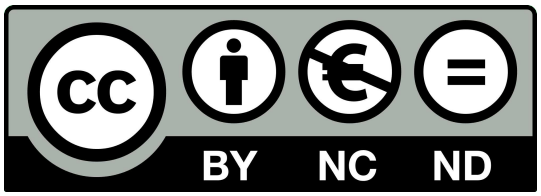
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